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Also by Robert Stam:

O Espetáculo Interrompido: A Literatura e o Cinema da Desmistificação ("The Interrupted Spectacle: The Literature and Cinema of Demystification")

Also by Randal Johnson:

Literatura e Cinema: Macunaíma do Modernismo na Literatura ao Cinema Novo ("Literature and Cinema: Macunaima from Modernism in Literature to Cinema Novo")

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Brazilian Cinema

Randal Johnson
Robert Stam

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Dedicated to **PAULO EMÍLIO SALLES GOMES** (1916-1977)
for all he has done to preserve the Brazilian cinematic memory.

2
"Cinema Novo"

Introduction

The polemic between the Cinema Novo filmmakers and the Popular Center of Culture reached a peak in 1962-1963 through disagreements over the question of the *auteur*. While the Popular Center of Culture favored collective discussion of film projects, Cinema Novo opted for a more personal, albeit no less political, form of expression. As Glauber Rocha was to explain, "if commercial cinema is the tradition, then *auteur* cinema is revolution. The politics of a modern *auteur* are revolutionary politics" (*Revisão Crítica do Cinema Brasileiro*). Because of its political commitment, Cinema Novo's use of the *politique des auteurs* differs radically from that espoused by the *Cahiers du Cinéma* critics in the late fifties.

Carlos Diegues's "Cinema Novo," published originally in *Movimento 2* (May, 1962), the journal of the National Students' Union, is one of the first formulations of the basic project of Cinema Novo. The article reflects the youthful enthusiasm of the movement while showing awareness of the long history of Brazilian cinema and the difficulty of trying to reach a market controlled by foreign interests. Diegues also indirectly expresses the movement's adoption of the *politique des auteurs* and the influence of Italian Neo-Realism when he observes that the Cinema Novo filmmakers, in their individual and personal investigations, have taken their cameras and "gone out into the streets" to film the marginalized majority of the Brazilian people in the ambience in which they live.

CARLOS DIEGUES

Cinema Novo has no birthdate. It has no historic manifesto and no week of commemoration. It was created by no one in particular and is not the brainchild of any group. It has no official theoreticians, no popes or idols, no masters or guiding lights. Cinema Novo is not *novo* merely because of the youth of its practitioners. Nor does *novo*, in this context, suggest novelty or modishness. Cinema Novo is only part of a larger process transforming Brazilian society and reaching, at long last, the cinema.

In the beginning there were Humberto Mauro, Mário Peixoto, Adhemar Gonzaga, and other pioneers of our cinema. Despite obstacles, they left a body of work. Humberto Mauro, for example, remains an important model for anyone making films in Brazil. Then came the *chanchadas*, mid-year comedies or carnivalesque celebrations. A specifically Brazilian genre, it offered some valid alternatives, but, at the same time, was defiled by bad taste and by the most sordid commercialism, representing finally, a form of cultural prostitution. Then Vera Cruz was founded, a bizarre structureless monster, without roots in our culture, nourishing itself on the dream of a European cinema in an illiterate and impoverished Brazil. Its failure was both financial and cultural. In its wake, the *chanchada* once again dominated Brazilian production, with "serious" cinema—sometimes cerebral and often ridiculously pretentious—running a very distant second.

At the same time foreign producers, distributors, and the exhibitors allied to them (and who were at times the same people) continued to dominate the market. Co-productions, invented as a kind of salvation for Brazilian cinema, resulted only in an absurd cost increase for *all* cinematic production in Brazil. There were also experiments with protectionist laws, and the state timidly turned its attention to the small, independent producer.

The independent producer arrived just in time. He became angry, stuck out his chest, closed his eyes, opened his hands, and threw his scanty resources into the cinematic adventure. He discovered miraculous ways of creating adequate technical conditions, begged for raw film stock, contracted capable people (discovering that Brazil was very well supplied in terms of excellent and inexpensive talent), outwitted the distribution mafia, exhibited his films, and made just enough money to be able to make more films. Gradually, the independent producer began not only to share his experience with others, but also to incorporate, with the same drive and audacity, the ideas of others. Soon, independent producers took on considerable importance.

Low-budget productions, while lowering the technical level of films, nevertheless offered the conditions—in conjunction with a policy of freedom of creation, invention, and treatment—for the emergence of Cinema Novo.

Brazil and its people became the central preoccupation of the new group of Brazilian filmmakers. They avoided both the touristic and picturesque attitudes that characterized co-productions and the cultural alienation inherent in an enterprise like Vera Cruz. Their goal was to study in depth the social relations of each city and region as a way of critically exposing, as if in miniature, the socio-cultural structure of the country as a whole. To take the people as theme, to give human form to fundamental conflicts, to make the people the center and master of the cinematic instrument. A critic from São Paulo, taking this option to its logical conclusion, exploded: "We don't want to make films. We want to hear the voice of Man." And the human voice will have to be heard in the northeast, in the southern latifundia, in Rio's *favelas*, in São Paulo's factories, and on the beaches of the fishermen of Bahia, indeed in all that is authentic and experiential.

Cinema Novo is a committed cinema, a critical cinema, even when, because of the youth and inexperience of its members, this commitment and this critical attitude become somewhat naive and lacking in analytical focus. But even this naiveté is valid, for Cinema Novo is, above all, freedom.

Freedom of invention, freedom of expression. Because Cinema Novo is not a school, it has no established style. On the contrary, a unanimous style makes a movement retrograde, bourgeois, frivolous, manifested merely, or at least most intensely, in the formal, artisan aspect of its expression. In Cinema Novo, expressive forms are necessarily personal and original without formal dogmas, because form is merely one of the terms of a totality of simultaneous instruments directed toward the communication of a truth.

Without wasting time on the relative merits of close versus long shots, without worrying about whether the specifically filmic resides in the camera or in editing, without slothful theorizing, but rather technically rationalizing the practical questions of cinema, Brazilian filmmakers (principally in Rio, Bahia, and São Paulo) have taken their cameras and gone out into the streets, the country, and the beaches in search of the Brazilian people, the peasant, the worker, the fisherman, the slum dweller. Many have already presented the results of their work, but the great majority will release their first films this year.

1962 will doubtless be a key year for national cinema, the year of Cinema Novo. In Bahia, *A Grande Feira* ("The Big Market"), by Roberto Pires, has already been released. The same director is now preparing *Tocaia no Asfalto* ("Asphalt Ambush"). Glauber Rocha is ready to exhibit *Barravento* and is preparing a film about peasants in the state of Rio along with Paulo César Saraceni. Rex Schindler, producing these Bahian films, will probably soon direct a script of his own. Nelson Pereira dos Santos is preparing *Barren Lives* in the northeast. In Rio, Guerra's *Os Cafajestes* has already reached the theaters. *Assalto ao Trem Pagador* ("Assault on the Pay Train"), by Roberto Farias, and *Cinco Vezes Favela*,

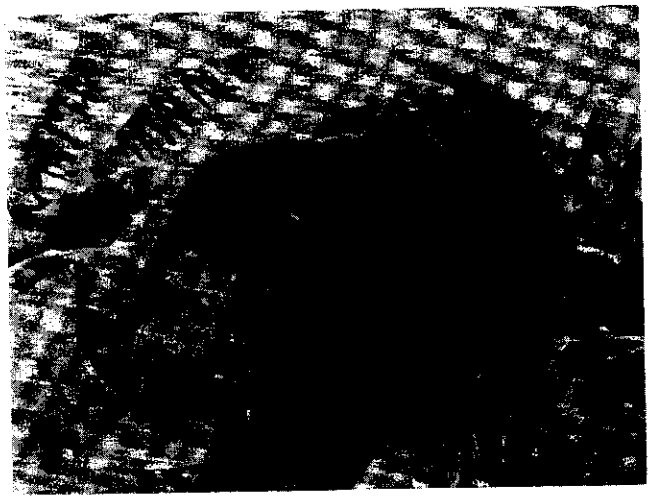
by five young directors (Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Marcos Farias, Miguel Borges, Carlos Diegues, and Leon Hirszman) are being readied for distribution. In São Paulo Roberto Santos is finishing his adaptation of Guimarães Rosa's *Matraga*. And there are many other projects either in preparation or in production. Cinema Novo is also defending itself with short films, a recent phenomenon in Brazilian cinema that contributes, for its part, to the training of filmmakers: Linduarte Noronha, Orlando Senna, Glauber Rocha, Paulo César Saraceni, Rex Schindler, Mário Carneiro, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Sérgio Ricardo, Paulo Huchmacher, Marcos Farias, David Neves, Affonso Henriques, and many others. Unfortunately, these shorts will probably not have commercial distribution.

Thus Cinema Novo is being created with spirit and invention and without official policies, cliques, or snobbery. Turned toward Brazil and its people, Cinema Novo is ready to take the streetcar of national cinema that has been off track for too many years.

5
"The Tricontinental Filmmaker: That Is Called the Dawn"

Introduction

Published in *Cahiers du Cinéma* in November, 1967, this text represents a further step in the radicalization of Cinema Novo. The twin references in its title, to Che Guevara's "tricontinental" revolution and to Luis Buñuel's *Cela s'appelle l'aurore*, reflect the double thrust, at once political and cinematic, of the manifesto. Che Guevara coined the term "tricontinental" in the late fifties to refer to the three continents—Asia, Africa, and Latin America—that had suffered colonization and that were now ripe, in his view, for revolution. Rocha's rhetorical violence responds to an increasingly repressive political climate within Brazil. He speaks metaphorically of "guerrilla" cinema at a time when Brazilian leftists, reacting to the closing of the political system, began to promote guerrilla actions in the cities and countryside of Brazil. Apart from its political interest, however, the essay also illuminates Rocha's own progression as a filmmaker. It renders explicit what was implicit in his stylistic evolution from *Barravento*, to *Black God, White Devil*, and *Land in Anguish*: a search for an avant-garde, self-reflexive esthetic that would fuse the didacticism of a Brecht or a Godard with the magic and violent anger of the Third World. Rocha simultaneously rejects both socialist realism and empty formalism as models for the tricontinental filmmaker: formal research without political thrust is impotent, while political messages wrapped in bourgeois forms communicate only alienation.



Júlio Bressane's *Agonia* (1973)

"The Tricontinental Filmmaker: That Is Called the Dawn"

GLAUBER ROCHA

For the Third World filmmaker, commitment begins with the first light, because the camera opens on to the Third World, an occupied land. Choices must be made, in the street, in the desert, in the forest, or in the city, and even when the material might be neutral the montage transforms it into discourse. A discourse that can be imprecise, diffuse, barbarous, irrational, but one in which even refusals are significant.

These films from Asia, Africa, and Latin America are films of discomfort. The discomfort begins with the basic material: inferior cameras and laboratories, and therefore crude images and muffled dialogue, unwanted noise on the soundtrack, editing accidents, and unclear credits and titles. And on the screen a desperate body writhes, advances jerkily only to hunch over in the rain, its blood confounded.

The tools belong to Hollywood as arms belong to the Pentagon. No filmmaker is completely free. Even when not the prisoner of censorship or financial commitments he remains a prisoner until he discovers within himself the tricontinental man. Only this idea liberates him, for within it the perspective of individual failure ceases to be important. Che Guevara said: "our sacrifice is conscious; it is the necessary price of freedom."

All other discourse is beautiful but innocuous; rational but fatigued; reflexive but impotent; "cinematic" but useless. Lyricism is born with words gliding in the air; but it is immediately structured into passive form in a sterile conspiracy. . . .

There is a great deal to do today. A national cinema that concentrates on didactic films makes a contribution: the de-intoxication from socialist realism.

> Simplifying the terms of these polemics, which involved some artists and functionaries, some defended a kind of socialist realism, while others (mostly artists) defended an art which would not renounce all the conquests of the avant-garde. The rejection of the first tendency was made clear in Che Guevara's essay, "Man and Socialism in Cuba," which condemned socialist realism without finding a completely satisfying alternative: for him, it had to be transcended. But to go further, one must begin from somewhere, and the avant-garde seems to be the best point of departure. (Jesus Diaz, "Partisans," no. 137)

Other Latin American countries, meanwhile, can only use their cameras to make official newsreels showing generals and their medals.

Tupi, Cangaço, Bossa

I. Brazil speaks Portuguese. In order to understand the phenomenon called Cinema Novo it is important to know that the Portuguese are less fanatical and more cynical than the Spanish: we have a heritage that is not as nationalistic as the Spanish. Brazilian filmmakers have lost their "awe" for cinema. They have laid their often awkward hands on cameras without asking anyone's permission. Although intellectuals used to say, to the point of convincing critics and intimidating filmmakers, that "Portuguese is an anti-cinematic language," Cinema Novo decided to take the daily speech and music of Brazil as its material. Peopled by long-winded, chattering, energetic, sterile, and hysterical individuals, Brazil is the only Latin American country that never had a bloody revolution like Mexico, or the baroque fascism of Argentina, nor a real political revolution like Cuba, or guerrillas like those found in Bolivia, Colombia, or Venezuela. So as sad compensation Brazil has a cinema that turned out sixty films this year (1967) and will double that figure next year. More than a hundred young filmmakers have presented films in 8mm and 16mm at the last two amateur film festivals in Brazil, and the public, disappointed by the last soccer match, discusses each film with passion. In Rio, São Paulo, Bahia, and other cities, there are art cinemas, cinematheques, as well as 400 different film clubs. From Rio to São Paulo, Godard is as popular as De Gaulle. Cinematic madness abounds in the land.

II. Tupi is the name of an Indian nation in Brazil. Its characteristics: intelligence and artistic incompetence. *Cangaço* is a mystic, anarchist guerrilla: the word *cangaço* describes violent disorder. Bossa is a dance: it

is also the art of feinting toward the right while attacking from the left, coming together in a dance with rhythm and eroticism. This tradition, whose values are questioned in the films of Cinema Novo, make up the tragic caricature of a melodramatic civilization. For Brazil has no historic density: there have been only a few military coups and counter-coups carried out in the name of imperialist interests and the national bourgeoisie. The populist left always ends up by signing a pact with the repentent right, advancing once more on the path towards "redemocratization." It is noteworthy that the political avant-garde of Latin America is always led by intellectuals and that poems frequently precede gunshots. Popular opera, music, and revolution all go hand in hand; that is our Iberic heritage. Today, in the Brazil of unforeseen reconciliations, the urban left is known as the "Festive Left." There one discusses Marx to the sound of the samba. But that doesn't stop students from descending into the streets to join violent demonstrations where professors are arrested, universities are closed, and intellectuals write protest manifestos.

III. Cinema Novo represents thirty percent of all cinematic production in Brazil. The collective nature of the movement allows for control over publicity, distribution, and criticism. Confronted with a relatively uncultivated (or at least, less literate) audience, a Tricontinental cinema has to overcome immense obstacles to create a means of meaningful communication in popular language and stimulating revolutionary feelings. A Cinema Novo film is polemical before, during, and after it is projected. A Cinema Novo film inevitably shocks the paradise of inertia of its public. Thus, *Vidas Secas* gives information concerning the peasants; *The Guns* goes beyond *Vidas Secas* to become an anti-militarist film. *Black God, White Devil* raises the protest of *The Guns* to a frenzied, fanatical level that is repeated in *O Desafio*. *Ganga Zumba* deals with blacks, *Os Cafajestes* is the urban version of *Vidas Secas*. From *Plantation Boy* to *Land in Anguish*, or from *Land in Anguish* to *The Brave Warrior*, Cinema Novo seems to lose its central thrust through the difficult exercise of individual expression; it could be said that still, taken as a whole, Cinema Novo forms a concerto that, as a kind of permanent, ongoing polemic, constitutes a political action.

Cinema

I. The past and present cinematic technique of the developed world interests me to the extent that I can use it the way the American cinema was used by certain European filmmakers. Certain cinematic techniques have transcended both individual auteurs and the films in which they operate to form a sort of vocabulary of cinema: if I film a *cangaceiro* in the *sertão*, it belongs to a montage tradition that is linked to the western, more than to individual auteurs like Ford or Hawks. On the other hand, imitation need not be perceived as a passive act, a need to take refuge in the established language of the form, in an attempt to "save" a film. In an

interview Truffaut said: "All of the films that imitate Godard are unbearable because they lack the essential. They imitate his casualness, but they forget his despair. They imitate his wordplay but not his cruelty." Most films made today by young filmmakers suffer from *mal de Godard*. But it is only by encounters with reality and by the exercise of one's profession that one can go beyond imitation. Brazilian films like *The Deceased*, *Vidas Secas*, and *The Guns* show how the colonized filmmaker can use technique to express himself. The problem is different for Americans or Europeans, but even films from socialist countries are anything but revolutionary. The attitude of most filmmakers degenerates into a kind of calligraphic cinema that betrays a contemplative or demagogic spirit. And the short films that are shown at international film festivals all seem to have been made in the same mold, manufactured (innocently?) on the editing table and distributed in projection booths, part of a cinematic production line.

II. Cinema is an international discourse and national situations do not justify, at any level, denial of expression. In the case of Tricontinental cinema, esthetics have more to do with ideology than with technique, and the technical myths of the zoom, of direct cinema, of the hand-held camera and of the uses of color are nothing more than tools for expression. The operative word is *ideology*, and it knows no geographical boundaries. When I speak of Tricontinental cinema and include Godard in this grouping, it is because his work opens a guerrilla-like operation in the cinema; he attacks suddenly and unexpectedly, with pitiless films. His cinema becomes political because it proposes a strategy, a valuable set of tactics, usable in any part of the world. I insist on a "guerrilla cinema" as the only form of combat: the cinema one improvises outside the conventional production structure against formal conventions imposed on the general public and on the elite.

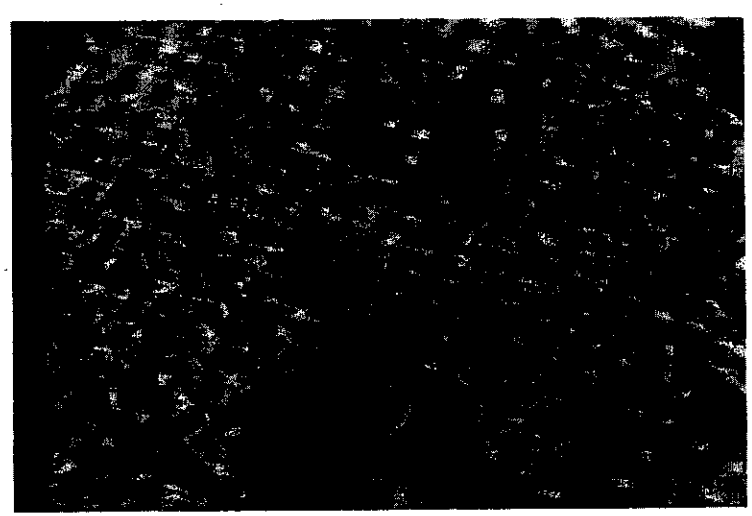
III. In the case of *Barravento*, *Black God, White Devil*, and *Land in Anguish*, I think that I have taken the first steps toward this guerrilla cinema. I see in these films the disasters of a violent transition. But it is through this rupture that I have come to see the possibilities for Tricontinental cinema. The goal of epic-didactic cinema cannot replace the epic-didactic mise-en-scène of a true revolutionary like Che Guevara, it can only fuse itself with it. If Buñuel's films displace the conventions of the continental cinema, the Tricontinental cinema must infiltrate the conventional cinema and blow it up. At the moment when Che Guevara's death becomes legend, poetry becomes praxis.

Translated by Burnes Hollyman and Robert Stam

6
"Cannibalism and Self-Cannibalism"

Introduction

Joaquim Pedro de Andrade's *Macunaíma* (1969), based on the novel of the same name by Mário de Andrade (1928), is generally considered to be the high point of the Tropicalist movement in Brazilian cinema. While



How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman **(1971)**

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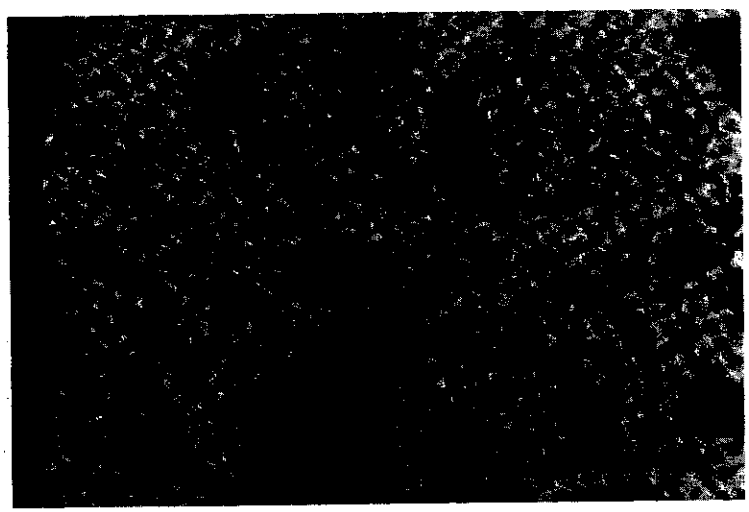


How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman **(1971)**

certainly a response to the political contradictions of post-1964 Brazil, Tropicalism also resurrects Oswald de Andrade's *Movimento Antropófago* (Cannibalist Movement) of the modernist period (1922–1930) in terms of the social and political realities of the late sixties.

The Cannibalist Movement of the twenties advocated the creation of a genuine national culture through the consumption and critical re-elaboration of both national and foreign influences. Imported cultural influences were to be devoured, digested, and reworked in terms of local conditions. Oswald de Andrade's anthropophagous program was influenced by Levy-Bruhl's concept of the primitive mind as being at a pre-logical stage as well as by Keyserling's idea that the true barbarian is not the "primitive," but rather the "civilized" alienated by technology. The Cannibalist program expresses a utopian desire for a return to a mythical matriarchal Golden Age when tribes, rather than enslaving their enemies, ate them. Oswald de Andrade's cannibal is not the Romantic ideal of the noble savage, but corresponds rather to Montaigne's cannibal who devours his enemies as an act of supreme vengeance.

Joaquim Pedro de Andrade's *Macunaíma*, released less than a year after the promulgation of the extremely repressive Fifth Institutional Act, is an ideological radicalization of Mário de Andrade's original text and perhaps the most successful re-evaluation and re-elaboration of the Brazilian Modernist Movement. Its coded language of revolt represents an extremely aggressive attack on the continued exploitation of Brazil by the international capitalist system. The following text, written as an introduction to the film for the 1969 Venice Film Festival, forms part of the English version of the film.

"Cannibalism and Self-Cannibalism"

JOAQUIM PEDRO DE ANDRADE

Cannibalism is an exemplary mode of consumerism adopted by underdeveloped peoples. In particular, the Brazilian Indians, immediately after having been "discovered" by the first colonizers, had the rare opportunity of selecting their Portuguese-supplied Bishop, Dom Pedro Fernandes Sardinha, whom they devoured in a memorable meal.

It is not by accident that the revolutionary artists of the twenties—the Modernists—dated their Cannibal Manifesto "the year the Bishop Sardinha was swallowed." Today we can clearly note that nothing has changed. The traditionally dominant, conservative social classes continue their control of the power structure—and we rediscover cannibalism.

Every consumer is reducible, in the last analysis, to cannibalism. The present work relationships, as well as the relationships between people—social, political, and economic—are still basically cannibalistic. Those who can, "eat" others through their consumption of products, or even more directly in sexual relationships. Cannibalism has merely institutionalized itself, cleverly disguised itself. The new heroes, still looking for a collective consciousness, try to devour those who devour us. But still weak, they are themselves transformed into products by the media and consumed.

The Left, while being devoured by the Right, tries to discipline and purify itself by eating itself—a practice that is simply the cannibalism of the weak. The church celebrates communion by eating Christ. Victims and executioners are one and the same; devouring themselves. Everything, whether it be in the heart or in the jaw, is food to be consumed. Meanwhile, voraciously, nations devour their people.

Macunaíma is the story of a Brazilian devoured by Brazil.

and takes to their ultimate conclusions many issues first raised by the modernist movement.

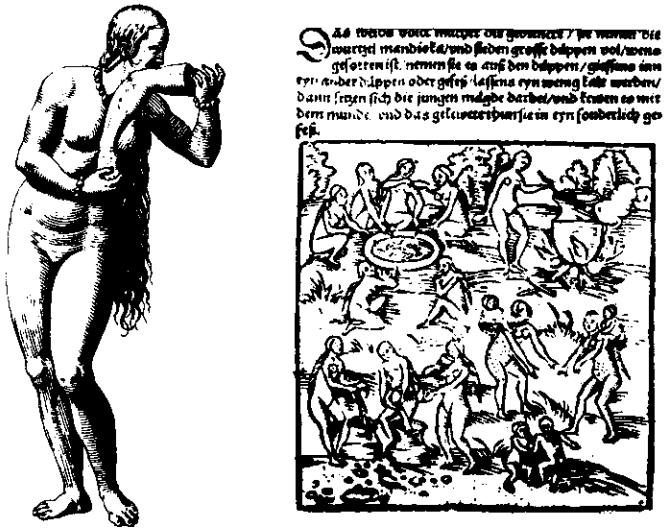
Notes

1. Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, "Crítica e auto-crítica: O Padre e a Moça," *Revista Civilização Brasileira* 1, no. 7 (May 1966), pp. 251-65. See "Criticism and Self-Criticism" in this volume.
2. *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 2d rev. ed. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1969), p. 728.
3. Florestan Fernandes, "Mário de Andrade e o Folklore Brasileiro," *Revista do Arquivo Municipal* 12, vol. 106 (São Paulo: 1946): 135-58.
4. Theodor Koch-Grünberg, *Vom Roroima zum Orinoco: Ergebnesse einer Reise in Nord Brasilien und Venezuela in den Jahren 1911-1913*, vol. II: Mythen und Legendun den Talipang und Arekuna Indianes (Stuttgart: Verlag Strõcker and Schrõder, 1924).
5. Mário de Andrade, "Anotações Para o Prefácio," in Telê Porto Ancona Lopez, *Macunaíma: A Margem e o Texto* (São Paulo: Editora de Humanismo, Ciencia e Technologia/Secretaria de Cultura, Esportes e Turismo, 1974), p. 94.
6. Lopez, *A Margem e o Texto*, p. 3.
7. Theodor Koch-Grünberg, "Mitos e Lendas dos Indios Taulipang e Arekuná," trans. Henrique Roenick, *Revista do Museu Paulista* 7 (1953): 21.
8. *Haroldo de Campos, Morfologia do Macunaíma* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1973).
9. Quoted in "La cara fea," *Análisis* (Buenos Aires, 28 July 1970): 428.
10. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1968), p. 24.
11. Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, "Sobre Macunaíma: Antropofagía y Autofagía," *Hablemos de Cine* (Lima) 49 (September/October 1969): 10.
12. Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda, "Heróis de Nossa Gente" (M.A. Thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 1974), p. 120.
13. M. Cavalcânti Proença, *Roteiro de Macunaíma* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1969), p. 319.

21
"How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman"

RICHARD PEÑA

How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman concerns the exploits of a Frenchman, in the service of the French Huguenots (then settling the area around what is today Rio de Janeiro), who is captured by a tribe of Tupinamba and sentenced to death. Tribal custom allows such a prisoner to live as a member of the tribe prior to his execution. The Frenchman is given a wife, and he soon takes part in tribal work, wars, and even religious ceremonies. After a brief attempt at escape he is finally killed and cannibalized by his former hosts. The original source for the film was the diary of a German adventurer named Hans Staden, who, while in the service of the Dutch colonizers of Brazil was similarly captured by some tribesmen, but escaped to tell the tale. Much of the early literature of Latin America exists in the form of diaries and letters concerning contact with the native American peoples. The idea of the author or narrator as captive, as opposed to a conqueror as in Bernal Diaz's *The Conquest of New Spain*, lends a peculiar power to writing like that of Staden's which later writers of fiction would use as a standard narrative device. In this sense the narrative of *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman* harks back to a sub-genre of adventure or travel literature called the "captive witness." The captive witness differs from other witnesses to alien cultures in that he is to die at a prescribed time, and therefore his captors offer him insight into their culture, confident that he will carry such secrets only to



How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman (1971)

the grave. There is no need to act or dissemble before him; thus, the account offered by the captive witness is unsullied by alien defensiveness. Melville's *Typee* also falls into this sub-genre and, in recent years, both science fiction and detective literature have appropriated the device.

The film begins with a declaration: "Latest news from Terra Firme." This statement falls outside of the body of the letter that follows, and thus forms part of the screenplay written by the director, who here begins to establish one of the film's major themes: the possible implications of this story about the colonial past for the Brazil of today (Terra Firme was one of the colonial names of Brazil). The film is announced as the "latest news," suggesting that in a way we must see it as a statement about the present. This motif of "presentness" or actuality is especially reemphasized throughout by the exceptional camera work of Dib Lutfi. The long, uninterrupted hand-held shots, quick zooms, and use of natural light are clearly reminiscent of the techniques of cinema verité. The film's approach to the Frenchman owes much to the branch of cinema verité called the "portrait film," such as D.A. Pennebaker's *Don't Look Back* and Ed Pincus-David Neuman's *Portrait of a McCarthy Supporter*. The portrait film gives a view or a description of a certain character or type of character, so that we can "know" and hopefully understand them. Directors like Pennebaker or Pincus and Neuman totally avoid the interview: the characters are never allowed to verbally present themselves to us. Rather we are forced to come to our own conclusions about the subjects of the portrait on the basis of our view of their actions in the world. Often these actions seem contradictory, making it difficult to assess our feelings

about the characters without considering the pattern and larger implications of their actions, and finally the sources of our own feelings. This approach might well have been a model for the relationship its director hoped to create between his projected audience and the Frenchman.

Following this statement comes a voice-over reading of a letter from Villegaignon, leader of the French Protestant settlers of Guanabara Bay, to John Calvin. Immediately, the contradictions between the verbal descriptions of "Terra Firme," and the images on the screen become apparent. Instead of a man being drowned after an attempted escape from justice, we see that man being murdered, or at least being subjected to a murder attempt. The official version of the conquest and colonization of Brazil—official in the sense that documents like the Villegaignon letter do indeed form the colonial historical record—is certainly not what we are being shown. Immediately thereafter we are given the film's first intertitle. The intertitles consist of quoted extracts from the colonial legacy of documents, letters, and diaries used as ironic, "historical" counterpoints to the events depicted. Often, the action of the film makes us look at, or interpret, these quotations in a new light.

The first intertitle describes the structure of alliances in force at the time of the story, as set down in the official record: French and Tupinamba versus Portuguese and Tupiniquim. The story of the Frenchman exposes the basic falseness of these alliances: in his shifting relations to these groups, and in his acceptance and rejection by them, the film actually implies that the primary conflict was always Europeans versus Americans, despite appearances or alliances. The final intertitle in which we are told of the slaughter of the Tupiniquim by their allies the Portuguese, gruesomely validates this theory with the only historical quotation used in the film that needs little further interpretation.

In the documents and "official histories" of the colonial past, the focus is always clearly on the acts and deeds of the white, European colonizers, presumed to be the ancestors of present-day Brazil. It is this easy assumption that the film wishes to challenge. In the first shot after the intertitle, we see the Frenchman coming up out of the water and on to land, dragging with him the heavy ball and chain that was meant to drown him. It is significant that the camera's—and thus our—point of view for this scene is from *on land*, from behind bushes, at a low height. When he is discovered by the Tupiniquim and Portuguese a few shots later, they will have been observing him from a similar vantage point. Yet while this point of view does link our initial view of the Frenchman with that of the land dwellers, the native Americans or Brazilians, the film avoids any sort of facile presentation of the "Indian's point of view" on colonization or on the narrative action, as we might find, say, in a film merely "sympathetic" to native American rights. The narrative of the film concentrates on the figure of the Frenchman in a way that is at once allied to the point of view of the tribespeople and also separate from them: the camera at several points declares its independence from the point of view of any character. The camera's attention to the Frenchman is not

justified by, for example, the interest of the tribespeople in him; on the contrary, they seem remarkably disinterested and accepting. The concentration is in a sense *our* interest in the Frenchman: our interest in determining who he is, or what he is, and what our relationship to him might be. Most of the audience for this film, in Brazil, would be white-skinned descendents of Europeans who, due to their emotional and intellectual formation, would "naturally" tend to identify with the Frenchman. Just as Rocha's *Land in Anguish* might be said to be obsessed with the figure of Paulo Martins, and yet is distanced and critical of him, so too *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman* attempts to be critical of the facile, ethno-centric response to the figure of the Frenchman as the "hero" of the film. On the contrary, as the title, *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman*, it attempts to include us in his destruction. The links between the present-day Brazilians and the cannibalistic tribespeople can be seen as one of the influences of the Tropicalist Movement in the film.

The attempt to define the Frenchman occurs throughout the film. Soon after he is captured by the Tupiniquim and the Portuguese, his captors are attacked and overcome by some Tupinamba warriors, who are the Frenchman's supposed allies. The fury and the chaos of the attack is beautifully conveyed by the frantic camera work, consisting of short, jabbing camera movements and quick zooms, with a playing-in-reverse sound track. In order to determine whether the Frenchman is actually French or Portuguese, the Tupinamba submit him to a kind of language test while the captured Portuguese recite different steps in a recipe (a joke in Brazil, where the Portuguese have a reputation for gluttony). The Frenchman recites, in French, a brief passage that translates as "The savages walk totally naked, and we walk unrecognized." The ambiguity of this sentence points to some of the difficulty in assessing the Frenchman: the need to get beyond mere surface appearances. The "savages" walk about naked and are thus easy to recognize, as savages, in their nudity; the French, however, who presumably walk about fully clothed, are unrecognized as "savages." The squabble between the two Tupinamba warriors for the Frenchman, a fight that seems in many ways comical, anticipates the more tragic fight between the Frenchman and the old trader later in the film, a fight in which the Frenchman's "savagery" is clearly shown. Finally, the inability of Cunhambebe, the chief, or any of the other warriors to tell that the Frenchman is indeed French and therefore an ally further points to the stronger dichotomy of European versus Brazilian that exists as opposed to the system of alliances mentioned in the first intertitle.

The first scenes of the Frenchman's life as a Tupinamba captive tend to stress his separation and distance from them. He is blond, bearded, and at least partially clothed and soon after his capture he is given over to the women. When he thinks that the women are trying to remove his beard, he loudly objects, as if trying to cling to his "Europeanness." In these first scenes he is always pictured as being separate from his captors, off in his own space in the frame or forcibly "tied" to them by ropes.

How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman (1971)

His relation to the Tupinamba soon changes, however. The primary cause for this is the arrival of the old French trader who, ironically, is introduced by another historical intertitle that speaks of the love that the native American people have for these "good and virtuous people, who have so many wonderful things." Immediately, the economic basis of this relationship is implied, a subject that the subsequent scene will explore. The physical differences between the old trader and the Tupinamba exaggerate those of the Frenchman; it places the Frenchman in a position, figuratively speaking, somewhere between the European and the Americans.

In this scene we are first introduced to the structure of colonial trading: the exchange of a few relatively worthless manufactured items, such as mirrors, combs, and jewelry for large quantities of brazilwood, pepper, and other primary materials that were extremely valuable on the European market. Beyond the mirrors and other goods, however, is the promise of gunpowder, the desire for which will grow into a sort of dependence as tensions between the native American tribes—in this case the Tupiniqim and the Tupinamba—were exacerbated by the Europeans. This creation of a dependence economy, a dependence based upon a kind of technological superiority of the Europeans, would give the Europeans an upper hand in any commercial dealings with the tribespeople.

The old trader's flat refusal to acknowledge the Frenchman as one of his countrymen—"Go ahead and eat him"—is symbolic of the Frenchman's separation from Europe and the colonial metropolis. He is, in a sense, rejected by the Europeans as one of *them*, he is permitted, though, to assume a "special role" in the new land, a role within the economy whereby he will be a sort of "private entrepreneur" with special and separate ties to the colonial metropolis, and a promise that someday he will be "reaccepted" by that metropolis. The Frenchman, physically and economically, is thus cast into a state of abeyance, somewhere between being a real American and a European. Significantly, it is the old trader, a European, who explains to the Frenchman the terms of his captivity in America.

The next scene, after the old trader's departure and an intertitle stating the importance of brazilwood in the early colonial trading economy, shows the Frenchman at work in the jungle with Sebiopepe, the woman who has been designated by the tribe as his wife. It is the first time that we see the Frenchman in any kind of relation to the Tupinamba other than that of captive. The two seem to work together comfortably but separately. As the two stop their work to take a swim, in one of the film's curiously erotic scenes, the romantic atmosphere is temporarily interrupted by the Frenchman's discovery of the gold piece in Sebiopepe's navel. He approaches her with an interest not seen up until then and he discovers that there is more where that came from. Nelson immediately cuts to a shot of the two sleeping together: their marriage, in effect, consummated, as the Frenchman sees that their knowledge of the presence of more gold will be his way of getting the upper hand with the old trader. He has discovered a way of using the tribespeople against the European. When Sebiopepe asks him to get up and go with her to look for more wood, he refuses, preferring to stay at home today—"chez moi," as French creeps back into his dialogue. This signifies his affirmation of his own Europeanness, as he now imagines himself to be, with the gold, on equal footing with the old trader, instead of someone to whom terms can be dictated, as they are to the Tubinamba.

The narrative use of the chance discovery of hidden wealth seen in this passage is part of a theme that runs throughout the film. Brazilwood, pepper, and gold all seem to be found simply "in the wild" in this new land and ripe for the taking, unnoticed by that land's inhabitants until their value is announced to them by outsiders. The chief can hardly believe that the old trader has travelled many miles "just to get wood"; similarly, Sebiopepe openly discusses with the Frenchman how she came upon the gold piece, and even shows him where she got it. The idea of hidden wealth that almost seems to spring out of the ground is related to the development of Brazil's own economic history, which has been based upon a series of "chance discoveries" of brazilwood, gold, diamonds, rubber, and other materials, which all led to regular boom-and-bust cycles of economic development too well known throughout the Third World. The manipulation of this discovered wealth, though, is totally in the hands of

the outsiders, the Europeans, who give a value to the wood, pepper, and gold, create a need, and thus a value, for the gunpowder.

As the Frenchman attempts to embark upon a new relation with the old trader, he too attempts to imagine for himself a new relation with the Tupinamba. This new relation is revealed immediately after he refuses to go to work with Sebiopepe. He asks her to tell him the story of Mair, the great Caraiba, the "great ancestor." As she begins her recounting of this tribal myth, Nelson cuts to a shot of Sebiopepe behind the gauzy material of the hammock, as if, with the start of the tale, she had entered a kind of "dream world." In view of this, the cut immediately after this shot is a bit startling, because instead of any kind of visual "continuation" of the dreamy quality of the preceding shot, the image we see of Sebiopepe and the Frenchman by a pool of water has the same cinematographic quality as the rest of the film: the same bright natural lighting. The myth of Mair will not be acted out in a mythical time and place, but in the world of the film, the Brazil of 1568.

Sebiopepe's voice-over narration—the second such narration in the film—recounts in Tupi a Promethean myth of the Tupinamba "ancestor," Mair, the great Caraiba, who elevated the tribe from an animal-like existence to a more human-like one. In her telling of the tale Mair teaches the Tupinamba how to build fire and how to move out of the caves within which they were hiding. While she is speaking we see, for the first time, the Frenchman with his head shaved in the manner of the Tupinambas, beardless, and naked. He only seems to stand out in his whiteness. Suddenly, the Frenchman's voice, speaking in French, takes over the narration. He details how the god built a new kind of house, better than the other ones, and how he taught the Tupinamba to organize their villages. All the time that we hear these further deeds of the god, we see the Frenchman himself acting out this part, performing all the works ascribed to the god Mair in the myth. Sebiopepe, then, resumes the narration, again speaking in Tupi, and completes the tale: the Tupinamba revolt against the god, and forsake his works. As she speaks we see the works that had appeared in the Frenchman's portion of the narration being destroyed; they burn his house, and treat him as they would any other prisoner, making him run through fire. We then see and hear Cunhambebe vowing that the Tupinamba will never forget who their enemies are. Sebiopepe then speaks of the killing of the god and its consequences: meanwhile, we see the Frenchman swimming and diving in a pool, in a shot that recalls the earlier pool scene between Sebiopepe and the Frenchman, at a time when he had been more fixed within his old role as captive.

In this sequence, Nelson again makes further usage of the European accounts of the conquest and colonization of America. One of the most common legends concerning the initial contacts between Europeans and Americans is that the Europeans were worshipped by the native Americans, as they were believed to be gods whose return had long been prophesied. One of the principal features by which the god might be

recognized would be his whiteness. The Frenchman, as he tells his version of the myth of Mair (in French), imagines himself as a kind of god in relation to his captors, bringing to them the blessings of his civilization. In the Tupinamba version of this myth, spoken by Sebiopepe, the European vision of themselves as gods is rejected, as the works of the Frenchman/God are rejected, and the Tupinamba are reminded by their chief never to forget their enemies. They have not been fooled, and in their rejection of him and his works they affirm something about themselves and their civilization: their self-sufficiency and integrity. Sebiopepe's conclusion of the myth, in which thunder and lightning issue forth from the head of the god after he is slain, is a sort of grim prophecy of the eventual destruction of the Tupinamba by the European cannons and musket fire.

The attempt at being a god having failed, the Frenchman next attempts to achieve some kind of full acceptance by the tribe, albeit in some special capacity, as he holds the secret of how to make the captured cannons fire. It is to this attempt at assimilation that the last half of the film is devoted. We see the Frenchman take an enthusiastic part in the tracking down and killing of some Portuguese: one of the most remarkable moments in the film occurs when the Portuguese turns to face the white-skinned "savage," now fully recognizable, complete with bow and arrow, yelling at him to halt in French. Later in the film, he will take part in tribal religious ceremonies, join the tribe in its attack on the Tupiniqim, and even rehearse his own execution with Sebiopepe. The old trader, during his second visit, mocks the Frenchman in reference to his appearance by asking him if he would like some beads.

The second scene with the old trader deserves special attention for its expansion of some of the themes mentioned earlier. The Frenchman attempts to assume a position whereby he deals in primary materials (gold) to the old trader, and in manufactured commodities (gunpowder) to the Tupinamba, becoming a kind of economic middleman. The defilement of the grave, with a skull and some pieces of gold framing the bottom edge of the screen, makes the act of extracting the "hidden wealth" a kind of unholy plunder. The fight between the two men is ludicrous, as has been mentioned, yet takes on a rather tragic tone as the old trader has his skull split open by a shovel. The killing serves several functions: it helps to further destroy any sympathy we might feel for the Frenchman, it further separates the Frenchman from the Europeans (the old trader being his second European victim), and finally, it eliminates the older kind of "foreign agent"—the European who looks like a European, who deals in manufactured commodities—and replaces him with a new kind of agent, curiously still a foreigner, yet one who looks, at least on the surface, like an American or Brazilian. The struggle between these different types of agents is in many ways a battle between father and son, as the latter type was certainly spawned and rejected by the former. Curiously, Nelson Pereira dos Santos cast in these two roles an actual father and son (Manfredo and Arduino Colasanti).

The next scene is in many ways the most problematic in the film. After

extracting the gold and jewelry from the grave, and burying the old trader, the Frenchman starts to paddle his canoe towards the European ship. Sebiopepe calls to him from shore, and after a series of eye-line matches, he decides to paddle towards shore. He tries to bring Sebiopepe alone with him, but she struggles out of his grasp. By the time she seemingly agrees to go with him, the boat has sailed out of reach. While there are several possible interpretations of his decision, his paddling back to shore when he had a clear opportunity to escape suggests that he no longer can escape. He has lost his Europeanness and cannot, finally, go home again. His sense of being suspended between cultures gives the second part of the film a pervasive air of melancholy. There is a boredom or sadness in his speech; the only time that he breaks into a smile during this part of the film is during the rehearsal of his execution with Sebiopepe as if he were fascinated and delighted at the prospect of his own demise. In one of the final shots of the rehearsal scene, the film cuts to an extremely large close-up of the Frenchman's face—an unusual shot within the context of this film—smeared with a reddish dye so that, for the first time, his skin color approaches that of the Tupinamba. Ironically, his assimilation into the tribe occurs on the eve of his own destruction. There really is no "middle ground." Assimilation of a European into the Tupinamba means, essentially, the destruction of the European.

It is in this light that we must see the film's final act of cannibalism as a gesture of defiance, a special kind of revolt. It represents the ultimate kind of assimilation: one that in the process of assimilation definitively transforms that which is being assimilated. The Frenchman does, finally, become part of the tribe, but in such a way that we no longer perceive him as a Frenchman. Significantly, Cunhambebe accuses the Frenchman's "people" of having cannibalized Tupinamba.

The final shot of Sebiopepe, the zoom in to her face while she is eating the Frenchman, bears this out: she eats him emotionlessly. Despite her warm relationship with him she recognizes that he is an enemy who must be destroyed. Destroyed, however, in such a way that he is not simply gotten rid of but rather incorporated into the tribal body.

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"On the Margins: Brazilian Avant-Garde Cinema"

Introduction

Like the United States, Brazil displays a vital avant-garde cultural tradition. Throughout the history of Brazilian film, more specifically, many directors have searched for alternatives to the dominant esthetics and the dominant mode of production. In the late sixties, an Underground Movement, influenced by international avant-garde currents but also characteristically, even defiantly, Brazilian, emerged in full force. The following essay traces the historical antecedents of the current movement, sketches its present-day outlines, and examines some of its most notable films.

"On the Margins: Brazilian Avant-Garde Cinema" *

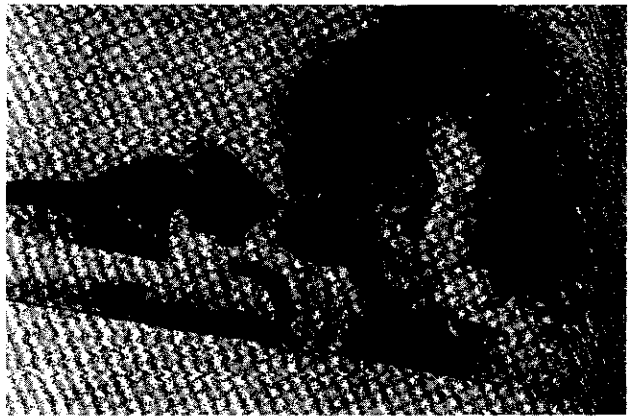
ROBERT STAM

Recent avant-garde cinema in Brazil has been diversely labelled. Sometimes called "Udigrudi," in a parodically Brazilian corruption of

*I would like to express my appreciation to Ismail Xavier for our long discussions concerning Brazilian avant-garde films. I am especially indebted to him in my discussion of *Bandido da Luz Vermelha*, *O Anjo Nasceu*, and *Rei do Baralho*.

English "underground," its practitioners and critics also refer to it as "Marginal Cinema," "Subterranean Cinema," and "Garbage Cinema." This most recent flowering of the avant-garde, which first emerged in the late sixties and that continues to the present day, actually extends a long and combative tradition within Brazilian cinema. Already in the twenties, the heyday of literary modernism, there were occasional avant-garde films. European city-symphony films like Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin, die Symphonie einer Grossstadt* (1927) and Alberto Cavalcânti's *Rien que les Heures* (1926) inspired a number of Brazilian imitations. Humberto Mauro made a short symphony film about his native city of Catagüases, and Adalberto Kemeny and Rodolfo Lustig made *São Paulo: Sinfonia de uma Metrópole* ("São Paulo: Symphony of a Metropolis," 1929). The latter film is a cinematic poem-tribute to what the Paramount press releases call the "thundering rhythms of progress" of the "brain-city of Brazil." The press releases, like the film itself, employ the language of heroic urbanism: "iron and steel jutting defiantly against the sky . . . all the feverish activity of São Paulo unfolding before our astonished eyes." Fourteen months in production, *São Paulo: Symphony of a Metropolis* animates a collage of material ordered chronologically (beginning at dawn and proceeding to dusk) and thematically (vehicles, men in uniform). In the film's final segment a shot transparently modelled on Millet's *The Angelus* shows a man in silhouette contemplating the city from a distance. An intertitle reads: "The Angelus, and Man Contemplating his Superb Work." The following shot—of an Angelus bell in a church tower overlooking São Paulo—literalizes what had been implicit. In the following shot, animated airplanes fly over a modernist cityscape drawn in the expressionist style of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. An intertitle speaks of the Brazil of the future, followed by a shot of an hourglass, which dissolves to a spinning globe, dissolving, in turn, to the globe inscribed on the Brazilian flag, on which is written the meliorist national device (equally reflective of the film's structuring ideology): "Order and Progress."

Mário Peixoto's *Limite* ("Limit," 1930), is a landmark film within the history of the Brazilian avant-garde. Although seen by very few people in Brazil because Peixoto withdrew it from circulation, *Limite* soon acquired the status of myth as *the* early Brazilian experimental film. Only nineteen when he made the film, Peixoto became conversant with the European avant-garde during his diverse trips to England and France. The film explores a situation—three strangers lost at sea in a small boat—and three separate but inter-related narrations. The opening image, held for over a minute, of a woman in handcuffs announces the unifying theme of bonds, imprisonment, limits. The film then successively recounts, in an oblique and fragmented manner, the stories of the three castaways and their diverse entrapments. A light-haired woman, who, we learn later, has escaped from prison with the complicity of a guard, flees, only to find herself trapped in another situation of oppression—work as a seamstress. Successive shots of her work instruments—spools, buttons,



Taciana Rei in Mário Peixoto's *Limite* (1930)

scissors, measuring tape—all bathed in a kind of dusty light, evoke the tedium of her job. If the images recall Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, the political attitude emphatically does not. Then the second dark-haired woman tells her story. After the prolonged walk through a fishing village, she returns home, where her depressed-looking husband awaits her at the top of the stairs. Later, a clip from Charlie Chaplin's *The Adventurer*, watched by a montage of laughing mouths, recapitulates in microcosm the structuring idea of the film. The clip shows Charlie tunneling out of prison to discover that he is at the feet of a guard: he excapes one set of limits only to encounter others. Then the man tells his story. A hand-held camera follows his promenade with a woman whose face we never see. He accompanies the woman home, then walks to a cemetery where a man (Mário Peixoto) tells him that the woman has leprosy. Gnarled trees and shots in negative evoke the narrator's inner torment, and frenzied pans express his dizziness. A storm arises, and the man commits suicide. Appropriate to a film in which work, love, and marriage have been revealed to be diverse forms of imprisonment, *Limite* ends with the same shot that opened the film—a woman in handcuffs.

Thematically, *Limite* seems designed to illustrate P. Adams Sitney's contention that the avant-garde finds its spiritual origins in nineteenth-century Romanticism, although the Romanticism here is more of the Francophonic variety then influential in Brazil. The anguished meditation on memory and loss, and the heavy atmosphere of emotional crisis, recall Lamartine, while the sea and landscapes recall Victor Hugo. At the same time, the film is imbued with a metaphysical *soif de l'absolu* worthy of Chateaubriand; the human imagination seems to butt against its epistemological and ontological limitations. The use of "sympathetic

weather" as climatic analogue to mental states, finally, invokes a characteristic romantic strategy.

Sergei Eisentein, who saw *Limite* in London in 1932, called it "an extremely beautiful film which one should submit oneself to right from the very first moments, as to the agonizing chords of a synthetic and pure language of cinema."[1] On a specifically cinematic level, *Limite*, while clearly not an experimental breakthrough film like *Man with a Movie Camera*, is fairly audacious. Imagistically, the film tends toward abstraction, often recontexting objects through excentric framing and disorientingly outsized close-ups. The plastic beauty and a senuous tactile quality of the images contrast strikingly with the structural pessimism of the film. Shots of fishing nets anticipate, by their graphic composition, certain shots in *Que Viva Mexico*. Peixoto and his cameraman Edgar Brasil seem especially sensitive to the play of light rippling over watery surface, glinting off scissors or "glowing" within a glass of beer. The occasionally frenzied camera movement and swish pans recall Kirsanoff's *Menilmontant*, which Peixoto presumably saw while living in Paris. The editing places identical shots in diverse syntagmatic contexts, structurally varying their meaning. Visual analogies link train wheels and sewing machines, telegraph wires and trees, a fish and a boat's prow. And the climactic, tour-de-force storm sequence consists of roughly seven shots of crashing surf and eddying swirls of water, edited into a frenzy so as to suggest a tempest on the high seas.

There is little evidence of an avant-garde in Brazil during the thirties and forties. Brazilian-born Alberto Cavalcânti was called to Brazil in 1950 to head the Vera Cruz production company, but the Cavalcânti invited to Brazil was not the director of the French avant-garde period (*Rien que les Heures*) but rather that of the post-war English period (*Nicholas Nickleby* and *They Made Me a Fugitive*). In Brazil, Cavalcânti and Vera Cruz made precisely the kind of film that would subsequently be denounced both by Cinema Novo and by Underground Cinema. Vera Cruz offered a "classy" cinema with high production values, completely ignoring the economic realities of Brazil, while both Cinema Novo and the Underground favored an esthetic that would dialectically transform a negative condition—underdevelopment—into a positive source of signification, by integrating into their very language the difficulty of making films in Brazil.

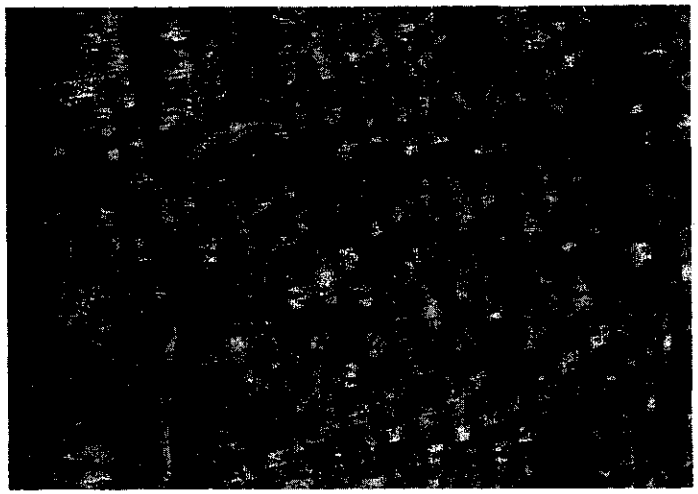
The Cinema Novo movement that emerged in the early sixties attempted to fuse political and esthetic avant-gardism. Like the Soviet filmmakers of the twenties, Cinema Novo sought to simultaneously decolonize cinematic language and liberate its people from oppressive political and economic structures. Just as Vertov lamented the penetration of Hollywood films in the Soviet Union, "impressing the magnanimous figure of the American millionaire upon the stern hearts of the Russian proletariat," so Cinema Novo formulated its opposition not only to the ideology and esthetics of Hollywood, but also to its distribution chains. At the same time, Cinema Novo challenged Brazilian commercial cinema; rather than exploit the

tropical conviviality of *chanchada* or the imitative glossiness of Vera Cruz, its directors searched out the squalid corners of Brazilian life. Although partially inspired by the auteurist production strategies of the *nouvelle vague*, Cinema Novo was politically and esthetically far more radical than the French movement. Politically, it was Fanonian, eager to give voice to the wretched of the earth. Esthetically, it strove for a definitive break with Hollywood models, invoking instead the precedents of Eisenstein, Vertov, and Brecht. The most advanced practitioners of what Glauber Rocha called "an esthetic of hunger" rejected the suave continuities and rapid tempo of culinary cinema in favor of self-reflective technique and harshly aggressive images and sounds.

The opening shot of Nelson Pereira dos Santos's *Vidas Secas* may be taken as emblematic of this avant-garde impulse even within the more traditional "Neo-Realist" Cinema Novo films. In a shot reminiscent of the final segment of *Zorns Lemma*, a static camera records, for a duration of four minutes, a peasant family's slow traversal of a barren landscape, as the wheels of a non-diegetic oxcart scrape and grind on the soundtrack. Other films of this period reverse the procedure of *Vidas Secas*. Rather than combine a static camera with movement in the shot, they weave pyrotechnically complex camera movements around a relatively static object. In *Os Cafajestes* ("The Hustlers," 1962) Rui Guerra winds spiralling car-borne travelling shots around Norma Benguel's nude body for nearly ten minutes. And in *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* ("Black God, White Devil," 1964), Rocha combines choreographed movement within the shot with an autonomous camera ballet, all orchestrated to the music of Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras*.

Underground Cinema burst noisily on the scene during the latter part of the second phase (1964–1968) of Cinema Novo, in an atmosphere of worsening political repression combined, paradoxically enough, with radical experimentation in the arts. In 1967, José Celso Martinez Correia staged his brilliant theatrical version of *O Rei da Vela* ("The King of the Candle"), based on a thirties play by modernist poet-playwright Oswald de Andrade. The preface-manifesto to the play called for a theater of "cruel and total provocation" whose political efficacy was to be measured not by the norms of sociology but by the "level of aggressivity." A calculated attack on São Paulo's "stupid and provincial bourgeoisie," the manifesto defended deliberate bad taste as the ideal expression of "Brazilian surrealism."

O Rei da Vela was dedicated to Glauber Rocha, and the high point of the Underground movement coincides with the general cultural movement called Tropicalism, the movement in which both *Terra em Transe* and *Rei da Vela* play a key role. The Tropicalists drew partial inspiration from the anarchic Bohemian avant-garde of the twenties, and particularly from the experimental attitudes and social irreverence of Oswald de Andrade. It especially appreciated his notion of "anthropophagy" as metaphorically applied to cultural products. For Modernists like Oswald,



How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman **(1971)**

cannibalism was an authentic native tradition as well as a key metaphor in their own struggle for artistic independence, a way of thumbing their noses both at their own "palefaces" and at colonizing overcultivated Europe, while heeding surrealism's call for "la sauvagerie" in art. "Only cannibalism unites us," Oswald de Andrade proclaimed and, paraphrasing one of the most illustrious of the palefaces, "Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question." The Cinema Novo directors revived the cannibalist metaphor in works like *Macunaíma* and *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman*. But while their approach to cannibalism was discreetly distanced—*Macunaíma* was based on an acknowleged literary classic and *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman* was set in the sixteenth century—the Underground directors were less circumspect, more angry, more audacious.

The Underground Movement, in this sense, constitutes both a rejection and a radicalization of Cinema Novo. For the Underground, Cinema Novo had become *embourgeoisé*, respectable, paternalistic, overly cautious both in its thematics and in its cinematic language. Just as Cinema Novo decided to reach out for a popular audience, the Underground opted to slap that audience in its face. "If the reader-spectator doesn't agree with what we are saying and doing," said filmmaker-critic Luiz Rosemberg Filho, "we recommend a strong dose of Tatu insecticide." And if the public did not appreciate "the most interesting films on this planet," Julio Bressane shouted, "too bad for you, squares!" The Underground was no less aggressive toward the Cinema Novo filmmakers, and their hostility was often reciprocated. Neville

Duarte d'Almeida blamed Cinema Novo and its "bourgeois intellectualism" for bringing Brazilian Cinema to "its humiliating, subservient, and culturally underdeveloped condition of subproduct of the Hollywood-Cinecitta-Rive Gauche circus."

As Cinema Novo moved toward relatively high-budget films characterized by technical polish and "production values," the Novo Cinema Novo (the New New Cinema) as it came to be called, demanded a radicalization of the "esthetic of hunger." Cinema Novo, they taunted, had become Cinema Novo Rico (nouveau riche cinéma). As Cinema Novo moved increasingly into color, "covering" its apparent retreat to a more commercial esthetic by the "alibi" of Tropicalism and its camp emphasis on gaudy colors, the Underground remained faithful to black and white. The Underground turned out inexpensive films in remarkably swift succession, rejecting a well-made cinema in favor of a "dirty screen" and "garbage esthetics." A garbage style, they argued, was the style most appropriate to a Third World country picking through the leavings of an international system dominated by First World monopoly capitalism. The films, consequently, bore the marks of economic oppression, inscribing into the films themselves—by inaudible grating sound and grainy images—the very precariousness of their own production.

The first indisputably Underground film, both in its production methods and in its thematic, was Ozualdo Candeias's prophetically titled *A Margem* ("In the Margin," 1967). The film has to do with "margins" in all the diverse overtones of that word. It is set, first of all, along the margins of São Paulo's irredeemably polluted Tietê river (surely the least noble estuary to water a major metropolis) where diverse "marginals" improvise their daily survival by begging, prostitution, and junk collecting. Along the river a highway, known in Portuguese as "the Marginal," also generates its marginal life. *A Margem* tells two surreally poignant love stories. The first involves a black prostitute and a bourgeois *déclassé*. Disappointed in her hopes, the prostitute unceasingly perambulates the riverside *favela* in her immaculate wedding dress, as a kind of tropical Miss Havisham. The second love story involves a blonde woman and a divinely touched madman who haunts the garbage dumps. Although the madman visually recalls the retarded children of Buñuel's *Las Hurdes*, he gradually assumes heroic, Chaplinesque dignity.

A Margem unpretentiously communicates a feeling of rare poetry and subdued audacity. Its subtle modulation of fantasy and realism recalls the Vigo of *L'Atalante* and there is even a fairly surreal wedding procession reminiscent of that film, set, like *A Margem*, on a riverbank. The film literalizes the metaphor of a "garbage esthetic," eliciting flowers from evil and stealing beauty from squalor. Candeias's subtle sense of lighting turns the miasmal exhalations of the Tietê into ethereal mists, and his gift for composition transforms riverside pipes, bridges, hulks of ships, and skeletal buildings into wonderfully abstract compositions.

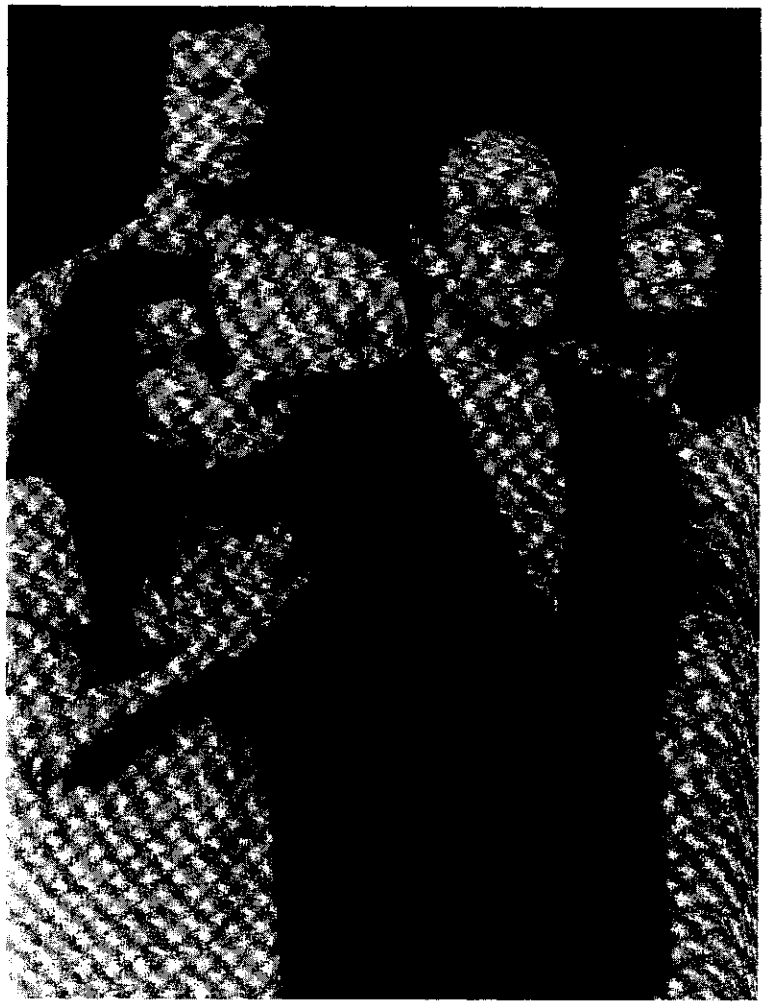
With Candeias one is often on the brink of the conventional, yet at the

same time oddly distanced from it. What might have been a banal shot of birds taking flight, conventional sign for "freedom," shifts its meaning because the birds are vultures and their flight ascends from a garbage dump. The film is replete with what at first seem to be conventional subjective shots, except that the shots are eccentric in their angulation and often only retroactively defined as subjective. Candeias seems particularly intrigued by the space that separates human faces from the recording lens; time and time again, hands extend themselves into the camera's field of vision in a gesture of communication that aptly metaphorizes the basic impulse animating the film itself.

A Margem treats its lumpen characters with great warmth and respect. The image of a slum dweller patiently extracting lice from her mate's hair is treated with immense tenderness, as an act of love equal to any other. *A Margem* suggests, to paraphrase a revolutionary slogan from May 1968, that "nous sommes tous des marginaux." The film denounces as a cruel mystification the notion that marginals are somehow "outside" society. In fact, they are its product and its distorting mirror image, the repressed other that reflects the truth about the larger social body. At the same time, the film hints at an analogy to cinema itself. There is no single valid cinema, in relation to which all other cinemas are to be belittled as marginal and inferior. For Candeias, all cinemas are created equal as all human beings are created equal. It is this quiet but radical egalitarianism that gives force to Candeias's work and makes him, in some ways, the conscience and founder of Underground Cinema.

Working in the low-life district of São Paulo called Boca do Lixo (Mouth of Garbage or "Garbage Zone" whence one of the other labels for Underground Cinema—Mouth of Garbage Cinema), Candeias initiated a number of filmmakers into a method of filmmaking whereby virtually the only expenses were the film itself, the laboratory work, and the camera. By 1971, the movement could claim a significant number of filmmakers and at least thirty feature films, including Rogério Sganzerla, *Bandido da Luz Vermelha* ("The Red Light Bandit," 1968); Ozualdo Candeias, *A Margem*, 1967; *Meu Nome é Tonho* ("My Name is Tonho," 1969); Júlio Bressane, *Matou a Família e Foi ao Cinema* ("Killed the Family and Went to the Movies," 1970); João Trevisan, *Orgia: Ou o Homem Que Deu Cria* ("Orgy: Or the Man who Gave Birth," 1970); Andrea Tonacci, *Blá-Blá-Blá*, 1968; *Bangue-Bangue* ("Bang-Bang," 1971); André Luiz Oliveira, *Meteorango Kid: O Herói Intergaláctica* ("Meteorango Kid: Intergalactic Hero," 1969); Neville Duarte d'Almeida, *Jardim de Guerra* ("War Garden," 1970); and Luiz Rosemberg Filho, *América do Sexo* ("America of Sex," 1970).

While they were in some respects intentionally marginal, the Underground directors were also marginalized, harassed by censors, and boycotted by exhibitors. They had difficulty getting their films screened not only because a censorious government banned some films (Neville Duart d'Almeida's *Jardim de Guerra*), or demanded unacceptable cuts in others (João Trevisan's *Orgia: Ou o Homem Que Deu Cria*), but also



Luiz Rosemberg Filho's *Crônica de um Industrial* (1978)

because exhibition was monopolized either by Cinema Novo or by government-encouraged soft-core porn films (*pornochanchadas*). When their films were seen, therefore, it tended to be in special showings, in cine-clubs, or at the diverse cinematheques.

While one hesitates to make facile generalizations about such a diverse movement, one can discern tendencies. The Underground films are generally violent, irreverent, iconoclastic; their very titles explode with polemical violence. In the hour of maximum repression, they strive to keep the spirit of anarchic revolt alive. Many films make reference to the climate of repression and torture then reigning in Brazil. *Matou a Família* includes an apparently gratitous torture sequence, while in *Jardim de Guerra* a marginal is pitilessly tortured by a right-wing organization, to the sound of Gounod's "Ave Maria." In these films, desperate lumpen anti-heroes embark on a mad search for personal and collective liberation, and sex and drugs become metaphors for freedom. At the same time, the films seem pessimistic about possibilities for real change, leading some critics to condemn the Underground as "suicide-cinema." In these films, an ineluctable hemorrhage seems to extend the protracted agony of Paulo Martins in *Land in Anguish*. Images of impotence and self-aggression proliferate. In Neville Duarte d'Almeida's *Piranhas do Asfalto* ("Asphalt Piranhas") a character castrates himself. The protagonist of *Bandido da Luz Vermelha* ("Red Light Bandit") dies electrocuted, and the two women of *Matou a Família e Foi ao Cinema* ("Killed the Family and Went to the Movies") kill each other joyfully as part of a homoerotic suicide pact.

The Underground is stylistically pluralist, but here again certain characteristic strategies appear. Conventional linear narrative tends to be subverted, but in diverse, often contradictory ways. Andrea Tonacci's *Blá-Blá-Blá* has virtually no "action" whatsoever; the film simply juxtaposes three discourses (three kinds of bla-bla-bla): that of a caricatural populist politician, that of a politicized worker, and that of an idealistic petite bourgeoise. The same director's *Bangue-Bangue* musically replays, with variations, two central actions: a quarrel between a taxi driver and his passenger, and the discussion of a couple in a bar. In other films, however, such as *Bandido da Luz Vermelha*, conventional narrative is subverted by a hyperbolic, parodic density of narrative incident. Editing styles in Underground films, similarly, tend to be anti-academic, but in different directions, ranging from the long static one-shot sequences of a Júlio Bressane to the deliriously rapid editing and frenzied movement of a Rogério Sganzerla. Many of the films use found footage; *Bandido da Luz Vermelha* cities American B-films and *Blá-Blá-Blá* uses newsreel footage of demonstrations in Paris and Peking. Others constitute generic parodies or conflations. *Bangue-Bangue* and *Meu Nome é Tonho* parody westerns. Ozualdo Candeias defines his *A Herança* ("The Inheritance") meanwhile as "a western based on *Hamlet* in which dialogue is replaced by the sounds of birds and animals."

Many Underground films take Cinema itself as theme. In João Trevisan's *Orgia: ou o Homem que Deu Cria* ("Orgy: Or the Man who Gave Birth," 1970) a gallery of figures, collectively representing Brazilian cinema in its diverse genres and incarnations, make a picaresque voyage

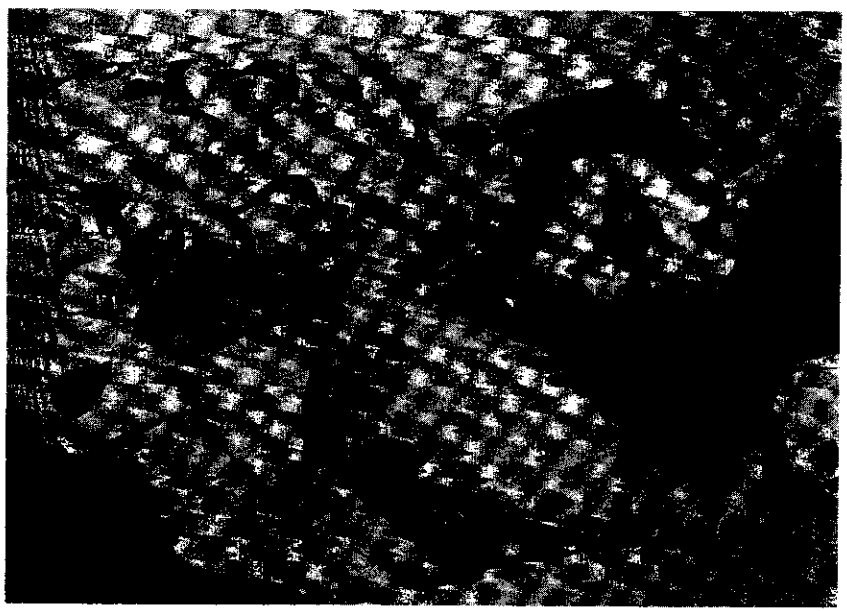
through Brazil in an attempt to rediscover the country. In this very carnivalesque film (surely worth of a Bakhtinian analysis), a transvestite imitates Carmen Miranda, a *cangaceiro* gives birth, a film-critic (Jean-Claude Bernardet) sits naked on a pile of books, and cannibalistic Indians devour children. In other films, the self-referential theme is announced in the title. Andrea Tonacci's *Bangue-Bangue* translates as "Bang-Bang" or "Western," and Jairo Ferreiro defines his *O Vampiro da Cinemateca* ("The Vampire of the Cinematheque") as a "science-fiction film concerning experimental cinema."

Rather than attempt an exhaustive account of the subsequent evolution of a movement embracing more than a score of directors, it seems more useful, at this point, to examine a chronological sequence (1968–1974) of representative features, highlighting three of their defining characteristics: their intertextual relation to other films, their character as metacinema, and their aggressive stance toward the spectator. Rogério Sganzerla's *Bandido da Luz Vermelha* ("Red Light Bandit," 1968) is an ideal starting point, for it is a seminal Underground film and one which typifies certain of the movement's strategies. Only twenty-three when he made *Bandido*, Sganzerla came to filmmaking as a critic from a prestigious São Paulo newspaper, and his films are obviously the product of a critic and a cinephile. He calls *Bandido* a "western about the Third World." Its characters are, once again, marginals: thieves, drug addicts, smugglers, prostitutes, and artists. The film's protagonist is Jorge, an urban hustler of dubious origins who joins the underworld of Boca do Lixo and who attacks the wealthy in the sanctity of their homes. He gains his sobriquet in virtue of his novel approach to theft: he invariably carries a red lantern and has long parleys with his victims. A thief and a killer who enjoys his work, he is as unsentimental as a film noir psychopath. Despite a general dragnet by the police, he circulates freely, supremely bored by the inepitude of the police. The sensationalist press amplifies his exploits, calling him the Zorro of the Poor. He spends his stolen money on extravagant clothes, excursions to the beach, and long evenings with prostitutes in tasteless cabarets. He frequents cinemas full of furtively trysting homosexuals (cf. *Masculin, Féminin*) where he looks at the screen through binoculars. The police finally catch up with Jorge, but not before he does himself in. When his persecutor, Inspector Cabeção, finds his corpse, the inspector accidentally electrocutes himself by the very apparatus that he had rigged up for Jorge.

Such a plot summary, however, makes *Bandido* seem more linear and of a piece than it in fact is. The film exploits a common Underground strategy: generic conflation. Sganzerla calls the *Bandido* a "film-summa: a western, a musical documentary, detective story, comedy, *chanchada* and science fiction." He wanted to meld "the sincerity of documentary (Rossellini), the violence of the gangster film (Fuller), the anarchic rhythm of comedy (Sennett, Keaton), the brutal narrative simplification of the western (Hawks) and the love of long shots and open spaces

(Mann)." This improbable collage of incompatible genres makes the film inevitably anti-illusionistic, turning it into a compilation of pastiches, a kind of cinematic writing in quotation marks. In his list of models for the film, Sganzerla neglects a crucial one—Jean-Luc Godard. In some ways, *Bandido* is Sganzerla's *À Bout de Souffle*. Like that film, *Bandido* renders homage to the B-film. Its principal actor (Paulo Villaça) physically resembles Belmondo and shares with him his flip style, a Humphrey Bogart at two removes. The film's wildly tilted angles recall certain shots in *Bande à Part*; the slapstick violence evokes *Weekend*, and Jorge's mode of self-annihilation is modeled on *Pierrot le Fou*. The overloaded, hyperactive soundtrack, meanwhile, recalls *1 plus 1*. Like Godard, Sganzerla emphasizes written language in the form of headlines, news tickertapes, and shaving cream graffiti. At one point, Jorge writes "Merci" on the back of one of his victims; a sardonic subtitle obligingly translates the word into Portuguese. Again like Godard, Sganzerla makes personal appearances in his film, once as a spectator in a movie theater, and once in the form of a childhood portrait. All these self-referential devices—the virtuoso display of homages, the omnipresent film posters, the cinematic citations—recall Godard.

Bandido's soundtrack is densely overlaid with intertextual references, a veritable anthology of Hollywood programmatic music, classical sym-



Rogerio Sganzerla's *Red Light Bandit* (1968)

phonic pieces, and Brazilian and American camp materials. Often three or four pieces of music play simultaneously. Beethoven's Fifth is fused with the Brazilian folksong *Asa Branca* in a provocative leveling of "high" and "low" art. But the film's most important innovation has to do with its off-screen narration. The narrators of *Bandido* have the affected metallic delivery of radio announcers. At times, the voices recall the aggrandizing tones of movie previews; amplified by an echo-chamber, the narrators declaim the hero's prowess, so that the film becomes a self-mocking advertisement for itself. At times the narration anticipates events; often it seems to lose itself entirely. The different narrators cut each other off progressively, and lapse into a verbal perplexity that is the sign of the film itself.

The narration of *Bandido* is decentered; it lacks a diegetic core. The off-screen narration is out of synch with what is happening on the screen, and the diverse narrations, with their multiple focuses, contradict one another. Within this heterogenous collage of discourses, the character becomes nothing more than a palimpsest of quotations. At one point, a subtitle intervenes: "my last bomb." It is characteristic of the film's discourse that we have no idea whether the "my" refers to the protagonist or the director.

Underground Cinema often displays an Oedipal hostility to its cinematic parent, Cinema Novo, a hostility clearly marked in the title of Bressane's *Killed the Family and Went to the Movies*. *Bandido* too stands in parodic relation—parody being that mode which reconciles affectionate emulation and mordant critique—to Cinema Novo. The director pointedly sets fire, at one point, to the famous Saint George triptych that opens *Antônio das Mortes*. At another point, the narrator mentions a girl who liked to go to proms and talk about Cinema Novo. The film's initial images and sounds demonstrate this tendency to simultaneously cite and criticize Cinema Novo. It shows black slum children dancing around garbage dump fires on the outskirts of São Paulo. On the soundtrack, Sganzerla quotes the powerful *candomblé* music from Glauber Rocha's *Land in Anguish*. This audio-visual montage constitutes both a tribute and a critique. The apocalyptic energy suggests Rocha at his best, but at the same time, Sganzerla seems to be saying that these images, and not the stylized allegorical images of Rocha's films, tell the truth about underclass life in Brazil.

While prolonging certain preoccupations of Cinema Novo, *Bandido* criticizes its characteristic modes of expression. The flip humor of the film indirectly critiques the humorless didacticism of some of Cinema Novo, while the brilliantly reckless camera work and unorthodox editing mock what Sganzerla sees as Cinema Novo's "academicism." *Bandido* is full of socially motivated black humor and satiric touches. A brilliantly drawn populist politician in the film proclaims his platform: giving Chiclets to the poor and constructing homes for unwed fathers. The narration tells of two slum dwellers trying to steal the other's wallet, only to

discover that neither even *has* a wallet. As a bourgeois woman is being robbed by the Red Light Bandit, she protests meaninglessly that she will not "talk to strangers." In all this one detects a kind of pop attitude, a refusal of Cinema Novo's high art seriousness.

Bandido develops, and modifies, one of the primary narrative and esthetic procedures of Cinema Novo—the erudite elaboration of the materials of Brazilian popular culture. But whereas the popular culture that interested Cinema Novo was largely rural and literary, the Underground is more interested in urban popular culture and especially in the mass-media. (Cinema Novo, it should be added, is largely Rio de Janeiro based, while the Underground is centered in São Paulo.) *Bandido* draws on the degraded material of the Third World mass-media, both in its local forms (the sensationalist press, the radio) and in its imported forms (American B-films and TV shows). The subproducts of an imperialized mass culture, the film suggests, now form part of popular culture in Brazil and these subproducts are more real to most Brazilians than the blind singers and folk dancers that peopled many Cinema Novo films.

André Luiz Oliveira's *Meteorango Kid: O Herói Intergaláctico* ("Meteorango Kid: Intergalactic Hero," 1969) was directly inspired, according to its director, by *Bandido da Luz Vermelha*. Like the Sganzerla film, it weaves cinematic *clins d'oeil* and pop references into a fragmented and discontinuous audio-visual tapestry. The film's loose narrative structure revolves around a day in the life of a revolted teenager from Bahia named Lula, including both the outer world of his actions (smoking dope, discussing politics, visiting a film producer, celebrating his birthday), and the inner world of his subjectivity. Like some of the protagonists of the English New Wave—Morgan, Billy Liar—Lula nurtures all sorts of vindictive and self-aggrandizing fantasies from the movies and the mass-media. The opening images show him, made up to look like the pictorial Jesus and haloed by backlighting, being crucified on a palm tree. Lula embroiders his daily routines with daydreams, successively imagining himself as Tarzan, Batman, and other figments of the imagination of the cultural industry.

Meteorango Kid is what Brazilians call a "filme de curtição," a film to groove on. It is a sensual hymn, or better, a cine-samba, to the counterculture. Dedicated, symptomatically, to the filmmaker's own hair, its tone recalls that of Dylan in "Mr. Jones"; the spectator, especially the square spectator, suspects that something is happening, but is unsure as to precisely what it is. The film orchestrates an orgy of Brazilian and Anglo-American pop references: Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, and Frank Zappa, seated magisterially on his countercultural toilet. The hero is "intergalactic" not only in the sense that he fantasizes himself as a science-fiction hero but also because his imagination is deeply involved with international cinematic and pop music "stars." The film itself speaks a kind of mass-media Esperanto—the

***A$$untina das Amérikas* (1977)**

cultural language that simultaneously channelled and co-opted the socially agressive impulses of late sixties youth. It was in this period, it should be noted, that the mass-media "invaded" cities like Bahia, until then on the periphery of Brazilian capitalist development, thus leading to a situation of enforced cosmopolitanism and to the heightened awareness of international pop culture. That the film merely registers this situation without really analyzing it is attributable, perhaps, to the director's youth (twenty-three) or to a conscious option for the sensuous and playful as opposed to the politically didactic.

The oeuvre of Júlio Bressane, one of the most prolific and brilliant of the Brazilian Underground filmmakers, constitutes a protracted exercise

in metacinema. The very title of his *Matou a Família e Foi ao Cinema* ("Killed the Family and Went to the Movies," 1970) evokes the preoccupations and tone of many of his films: the Oedipal violence of "killed the family," the self-referentiality of "went to the cinema," and the scandalous parataxis of the copulative that promiscuously equates the stuff of antique tragedy (patricide and matricide) with the witless search for entertainment. The provocative amorality of the title announces a film in which stomach-turning brutality is registered with icy indifference. The murders promised by the title are delivered, with virtually no additional spectatorial preparation, during the first five minutes. The film elicits, and then dissipates, its enigmas, in what amounts to a kind of perverse hermeneutics; it refuses to slowly and coyly remove the garments of the plot in the conventional narrative striptease.

Having "killed the family," Bressane's nameless protagonist "goes to the movies." He sees, more precisely, a film called "Perdidas de Amor" ("Lost Women of Love"). At this point, the film becomes a Chinese box of representations within representations, for the film never clearly opens or closes the quotation marks around the film-within-the-film. It is never clear which film we are seeing: *Matou a Família* or *Perdidas de Amor*. At one point one of the women characters, presumably from "Perdidas de Amor," speaks of seeing a film consisting of "crimes in dirty places without any connection," a description that applies equally well to *Matou a Família* itself. Thus a play of doublings and mirror images is set up, an infinite regress of representations in which the spectator loses his/her bearings and is forced to reflect on the factitious status of filmic representation itself.

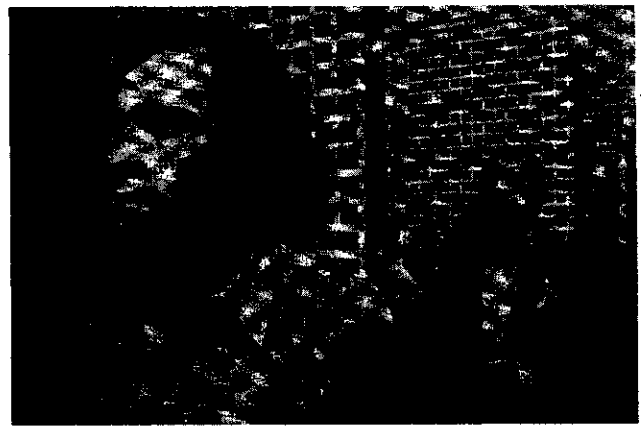
Matou a Família—by its "faulty" technique, its gratuitous dialogue, its disjunctive soundtrack, its caricatural acting—"exiles" its own spectators. It lays end to end autonomous sequences with only minimal connection, some characterized by horrendous violence and others by vacuous banality. We as spectators feel equally exiled in both instances, for the film provides no dramatic or characterological center, no perspective from which to judge the banality or the horror. This decentering occurs, for example, when Bressane superimposes Carmen Miranda's effervescent version of "What a great country for partying" on images of unredeemed squalor. It occurs, again, in the film's final sequence, where the two women, tenderly, playfully, lingeringly, murder each other, to the sound of a Brazilian pop singer endlessly entoning the same hackneyed phrase, while the camera maintains its aggressively laconic attitude.

Bressane's *O Anjo Nasceu* ("The Angel Is Born"), released the same year as *Matou a Família*, develops certain variations on these structural aggressions. If *Matou a Família* is perverse in its hermeneutics, *O Anjo Nasceu* is perverse in its syntax. The film maintains the facade of a linear tale: two bandits—one black and one white—steal and murder. The perversity consists in the film's ellipses. First of all, it often inverts the conventional process by eliding not the superfluous but rather that which the

conventional spectator would regard as most essential. The white bandit, at one point, is obviously wounded, but the film never explains how he received his wound. Secondly, *O Anjo Nasceu* refuses the conventional narrative legerdemain that suggests that the events of the film form part of a temporal continuum extending beyond the film itself, with an implied "off-screen" anteriority (a setting, a situation) and futurity (the projected conjugal bliss of classical happy endings). The opening shots of a slum, for example, seem to promise the kind of sociological definition one might expect from a conventional realistic film, and more precisely, from a Neo-Realist or early Cinema Novo film. Instead, the film abruptly changes setting and the slum is forgotten. The initial shot is retroactively exposed as a pseudo-establishing shot, a sociological red herring. The film refuses to imply some social or psychological substratum on which the film rests.

By its refusal to make any comment on its marginal characters, *O Anjo Nasceu* grants them a kind of understated solidarity. The two criminals might be seen, in this sense, as recalling the radical criminality evoked by the figure and the work of Saint Jean Genet, comedian and martyr. Their crime simply exists, without forethought, without program, without redemption. Its tranquil self-confidence becomes clear in the sequence where they break into the house they plan to use as a hideout. They enter the house in the most natural way, without surreptitiousness, exploring it with unaffected curiosity, as if there were never any question that it belonged to them as much as to its "owners." At another point, the two bandits watch the televised transmission of the first astronauts landing on the moon. Richard Nixon, the earthly representative of official power, occupying a small rectangle to the left of the screen, congratulates the astronauts with perfunctory clichés about peace and progress. The black bandit comments: "They're really out of it. Why do they go to the moon, when I've already been there for a long time?" As Brazilian critic Fernando Mesquita suggests, the bandits, in their lunar solitude, represent the hidden face of the official earth. The film implicitly identifies with this hidden face; the film itself represents a cool and tranquil kind of criminality, an audio-visual assault and battery. Like the crimes depicted, it simply exists in all of its provocative gratuitousness, a nihilistic gesture directed against the hypocritical discourse of power.

The film's final shot typifies its refusal of all teleology and redemption. A static shot, held for eight minutes, shows a deserted highway stretching toward the horizon. On the soundtrack: a Brazilian folksong with no clear relation either to the image or to the "story" of the bandits. Virtually nothing occurs within the image, except that at one point the camera zooms in, abruptly and uselessly, as if in an attempt to take the vanishing point by surprise. The zoom, a conventional signifier of a movement of attention, here signifies nothing. Unlike the forty-five-minute zoom of Michael Snow's *Wavelength*, which at least culminates in a visual pun referring back to the film's title, the zoom in *O Anjo Nasceu* has no



Paulo Cesar Pereio in *Bangue-Bangue* (1971)

diegetic or structural justification whatsoever. It is simply there. One need only think of the countless "meaningful" highway endings of films—from Chaplin's final iris-ins to Paulo's upraised rifle in Rocha's *Land in Anguish*—to realize how radical *O Anjo Nasceu* is in its resolutely proffered negations.

Andrea Tonacci's *Bangue-Bangue* (1971) is perhaps even more audacious in its metacinematic subversions. The title refers, in Portuguese, to any violent film and especially to westerns, but its author defines the film as a "Maoist detective comedy." Like many of Bressane's films, *Bangue-Bangue* constantly promises a story that never arrives, which is perpetually derailed and interrupted. The film consists of fifteen segments, many of them composed of one-shot sequences, and involves five characters: a central figure, who frequently dons a monkey mask, chased by three gangsters and a magician who makes the characters appear and disappear by stop photography, as the auditory logo of Twentieth Century-Fox plays on the soundtrack. One of the gangsters is blind; he shoots around him indiscriminately, providing the film with the titular bang-bangs and establishing a robust atmosphere of incompetent marksmanship. The chase structure of the film is mere pretext, a tenuous thread on which to hang images and sounds. This tenousness becomes obvious when, fairly late in the film, one of the gangsters (a transvestite) begins to offer what seems a distorted synopsis of the film: "Once upon a time there were three bad bandits. They say that one was the mother, but no one knows for sure." Suddenly, the plot is abruptly cut short by a cream pie, coming from behind the camera, thrown in the face of the storyteller, in a gesture that aptly expresses the filmmaker's scorn toward conventional plot.

Bangue-Bangue, according to its director, is partially inspired by Umberto Eco's *Oeuvre Ouverte*. The film constitutes a structured play of changes on given situations and images, variations on the theme of virtually nothing. Three sequences especially recapitulate, in a kind of mise-*en-abîme*, the film's structural logic. In one, an extended one-shot sequence, the central character argues with a taxi driver about the best route to a given destination, as a camera placed behind both characters records the taxi's confused itinerary through the streets of Belo Horizonte. The sequence, which recurs in a slightly different form later in the film, implicitly compares the film experience itself to a taxi ride, with its driver-director and its passenger-spectator, in which both the destination and the route are not simply given but must be argued over. The question is process, not product, passage, not destination. Another sequence proposes a different analogy for the film experience. A man and a woman initiate, five times in succession, the same conversation, concluding that the word "Hi" should be substituted for expressions like "How are you" and "Good morning." The sequence implicitly compares the film experience to discourse, to conversation. It consists, more accurately, of metadiscourse, discourse on discourse, just as the film is metacinema. The point of the discourse, furthermore—the desirability of using as few words as possible—is contradicted by the articulation of the discourse, which is wordy and redundant. What matters, the sequence seems to be saying, is not the message but the articulation, or better, the inseparable connection between the two, a point that is illustrated when the same conversation is played once with harsh ambient noise and then again with harp music, to completely different effect.

The third "microcosmic" sequence is a five-minute "chase" in which the camera pursues a jeep over a Monument Valley–like landscape. The accompanying music represents a kind of pop version of Ravel's *Bolero* in the sense that it maintains a threshold of slowly accelerating excitement that never reaches a climax. Like the film as a whole, the sequence mocks the spectator who demands explanations (the long ride is never "justified" narratively) and who insists on some sort of narrative orgasm, rather than this frustrating plateau of artificially prolonged tumescence, an orgasm that the film, in its perpetual coitus interruptus, rigorously denies.

In a number of sequences of *Bangue-Bangue* the principal character dons a monkey mask and looks at himself in the mirror. The spectator is confronted with an ignoble double, a grotesque repository for a spectatorial identification, in an image whose Lacanian implications might well be explored. At the same time, we occasionally see the camera reflected in the mirror or in the eyes of the ape man. When we do not literally see the camera or, as at one point, the entire filmmaking crew, we see the shadow of the camera. *Bangue-Bangue*, from its title to its final image of the soundstrip passing through a movieola, simply never lets us forget that we are spectators at a film.

Júlio Bressane's *Rei do Baralho* ("King of the Cards," 1973), like

Bangue-Bangue, might be said to consist of scraps from the junk heap of cinematic history. What Tonacci does with the gangster film, Bressane does with the *chanchada* (the frivolous Brazilian genre in which Carmen Miranda made her debut). *Rei do Baralho* is a metachanchada, a parody of a parody in the sense that *chanchada* already tended to parody, at times unconsciously, American musical comedies. *Rei do Baralho* was filmed in studios specifically associated with the *chanchada* tradition—the Cinédia studios in Jacarepaguá—and exploits that studio's decor. The film provides a collage of stereotype scenes, each associated with a specific set: a ship, a casino, a cabaret. The decors are minimal and impoverished, in the style of *chanchada*, and one shot reveals the totality of the space, revealing it as forming the self-chosen parameters of much of the film's fiction. The "plot" centers on a discreet romance between Grande Otelo (the black actor best known in the United States for his role in *Macunaíma*) and a blonde Jayne Mansfield look-alike. The film weaves between them a ludic-erotic play of promises, delays, detours, and interdictions, a kind of *Last Year in Jacarepaguá*. The title and its card reference already announces the film's aleatory serial organization, in which specific shots, gestures, scraps of dialogue, situations, become cards to be shuffled at the filmmaker's will. Despite its numerous frustrations for the spectator, *Rei do Baralho* does offer one conventional satisfaction. In the final shot, the two principals, who up to this point have barely touched, exchange a prolonged, and very Hollywoodean, kiss. Bressane has shuffled his cards in such a way as to deal out at least this one final, if ironic, *frisson*.

Artur Omar's *Triste Trópico* (1974) might best be defined as a metacinematic anthropological documentary. Its title, transparently inspired by Lévi-Strauss's ethnographic memoir about Brazil, triggers an evocative chain of cultural associations. While Lévi-Strauss went from Europe to Brazil only to discover, in a sense, the ethnocentric prejudices of Europe, the human subject of *Triste Trópico* goes to Europe—and here his trajectory parallels that of innumerable Brazilian artists and intellectuals—only to discover Brazil. Thus the film inserts itself within the extended discussion of Brazil's problematic cultural relationship to Europe—its colonizing mother—a discussion undergoing frequent metamorphoses and changes of etiquette: "Nationalism," "Modernism," "Tropicalism." *Triste Trópico* is not a Tropicalist film, however; it is rather a distanced reflection on the whole notion of the "tropics" as Europe's other, as something exotic.

Triste Trópico disorients by constantly altering its relation to the spectator. The opening shots—traffic in São Paulo, old photographs—and their musical accompaniment, make us expect a fairly innocuous documentary. An off-screen narrator, with the confident tone and stilted language to which documentaries have accustomed us, tells us that the film concerns a certain Arthur Alvaro de Noronha, known as Dr. Arthur, who returned from studies in Paris to practice medicine in Brazil.

Artur Omar's *Triste Trópico* (1974)

Footage, presumably dating from the period of Dr. Arthur's life, shows a man with his family; we infer that the man in the image is Dr. Arthur. In Paris, we are told, the doctor became friendly with André Breton, Paul Eluard, and Max Ernst, our first clue that a truly surreal biography awaits us. As the film continues, two things happen. First, the narration becomes progressively more improbable and hallucinatory. The doctor becomes involved with Indians, compiles an almanac of herbal panaceas, becomes an indigenous Messiah, and finally degenerates into sodomy (an exclamatory intertitle underlines the horror) and cannibalism. The narrated descent into a Brazilian Heart of Darkness coincides with our own descent into a tangled jungle of cinematic confusion. Secondly, the images progressively detach themselves from the narration, becoming less and less illustrative and more and more chaotic and apocalyptic. We begin to suspect that we have been the dupes of an immense joke, as if Borges had slyly rewritten Conrad and that the illustrious Dr. Arthur is merely the figment of the imagination of the director, whose name, we should remember, is also Arthur.

The central procedure of *Triste Trópico* is to superimpose an impeccably linear (albeit absurd) narration on extremely discontinuous sonorous and imagistic materials. While the narration is coherent within the limits of its implausibility, all the other tracks of the film—image, music, noise, titles—form a kind of serial chaos, an organized delirium. The image track consists of the most heterogenous materials: amateur movies from the twenties, contemporary footage from Europe, shots of Rio's carnival, staged scenes, archival material, clips from other films,

engravings, book covers, and almanac illustrations. The music constitutes a chaotic anthology of Brazilian, American, Argentinian, and Cuban music, inserted briefly and discontinuously as if someone were rapidly switching the radio dial. Within this audio-visual bricolage we encounter certain Lévi-Straussian binary oppositions; some specifically cinematic (black-white versus color; two-dimensional versus three-dimensional; old footage versus new; static versus moving) and some broadly cultural: coast and interior ("raw" Brazil and "cooked" Europe; classical Apollonian order and Dionysian Carnivalesque frenzy; *la pensée sauvage* and *la pensée civilisée*).

Triste Trópico is a Brazilian *Witchcraft through the Ages*, and the primary object of its attack is the witchcraft of cinema itself. The film constantly surprises us in our naive belief that seeing is believing, that what we hear is what we see, and that what we see is what we hear. The narration's constant attempt to validate itself with dates, statistics, citations, and archival footage is a joke on the suspect authenticating procedures of cinema itself and on our own implicit faith that narrators will not abuse our credulity. The good Doctor Arthur Omar does not offer us a magic potion. He does not celebrate witchcraft; rather, he exposes the craft behind its rituals. Rather than have us become magicians, he would have us all become our own anthropologists.

The most recent productions of the Brazilian avant-garde, in sum, define themselves by a series of refusals—of linear narrative, of closure, of technical "competence," of conventional continuity. Their relation to the spectator is one of aggression, creating what Ismail Xavier has called a "festival of discomfort." Rather than entertain, they create a salutary disease.